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Austin, Texas
TEXAS.

BY
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"Kemper County Vindicated," "The Bench and Bar of Mississippi."*

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Austin, Texas

'Tis not in mortals to command success, but
We'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it.

—ADDISON'S CATO.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

ST. LOUIS:
NIXON-JONES PRINTING CO.
1885.

THOMAS HARRISON.

The subject of this sketch was born in Jefferson County, Alabama, on the 1st of May, 1823, but in his early youth removed with his father's family to Monroe County, Mississippi, where he was reared and educated; and if ever the beacons of parental virtue shed hallowed light along the pathway of youth, he has had the noblest incentives for vigorous and virtuous exertion in the strife for eminence. The author knew his father, Isham Harrison, well, and he was one of the best men he ever knew. He was known in Mississippi as "Father Harrison," and, as a model of Christian meekness and philanthropy, was held in the highest respect and veneration by all ages and classes of people.

Thomas Harrison removed to Texas in 1843, and soon afterwards began the study of law in the office of his brother-in-law, William H. Jack, of Brazoria County; and when he had prepared himself for the bar he returned to Mississippi and located in Aberdeen, and began the practice of his profession with the view of returning to Texas after having acquired some professional experience among his old friends and neighbors.

But the Mexican war, which was just beginning, kindled in his bosom a spirit of patriotism which no restraints could control, and, in 1846, he enlisted in McClung's company, in the First Regiment of Mississippi Rifles, commanded by Jefferson Davis, and participated in the heroic capture of the fortifications of Monterey. At the expiration of his term of service—one year—he removed to Houston, Texas, and in 1850–51 represented Harris County in the Legislature; but being attracted by the thrift and prospects of Central Texas, he located in 1851 at Marlin,

in Falls County, and in 1855 settled at Waco, which he has made his permanent home.

In 1857 he was induced by his friends to become a candidate for district judge in opposition to Judge R. E. B. Baylor, who had long been a popular incumbent of that office, and after an active canvass was defeated by a small majority.

In 1860 he was elected captain of a volunteer company organized in Waco, and was sent by General Houston on a campaign of six months' service in the regiment of Colonel Dalrymple against the Indians on the frontiers along the Pease, Prairie Dog, and Canadian Rivers. While engaged in this service he was mainly instrumental in compelling the surrender of the United States troops at Camp Cooper, whose stores were a timely contribution to the operations of the campaign. This was perhaps the first attack made by State troops upon the forces of the general government, and removed at the outset a garrison which might have become the nucleus for an invasion of the State. In 1861 he was chosen captain of a company of cavalry organized at Mileau for the Confederate service, and joined the regiment of Colonel B. F. Terry, at Houston, afterwards known as the famous "Texas Rangers." This regiment was ordered to proceed at once to Bowling Green, Kentucky, and upon its reorganization at that place, Captain Harrison was elected major, and from that time his career was identified with that of the gallant Terry. Slowly winning his way by meritorious conduct, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel, then colonel, and, finally, to the rank of brigadier-general of cavalry, and gained the distinction of being one of the most efficient officers in the army.

His services at Shiloh were conspicuous. He covered the rear of the Confederate army when, on the second day, it retired from the field, and with two hundred of his "Rangers" charged and broke the pursuing cavalry of the enemy, striking and so confusing the van of the advancing infantry that the pursuit was immediately abandoned. He commanded a brigade of cavalry at the battle of Murfreesboro, with which he penetrated the enemy's lines, capturing

a number of pieces of artillery and a large quantity of stores, which he brought out after receiving positive orders to return. He afterwards participated in the capture of Murfreesboro by General Forest, and having served with distinguished efficiency through the severe campaign of General Longstreet against Knoxville, styled the "Valley Forge" of the war, at its close he was recommended for promotion to the rank of brigadier-general by his superior in command, General Armstrong, who characterized him as the best colonel of cavalry in the army.

Gen. Harrison led his column in all the great battles of the army of Tennessee except that of Missionary Ridge, and it was near Rome, Georgia, that the author, who commanded a company of cavalry in Armistead's brigade, first met him, and not under very happy circumstances. That brigade, commanded at that time by the gallant Col. P. B. Spence, had, during two consecutive days, driven back the Federal cavalry in its attempts to advance from Rome, when Gen. Harrison came up with his brigade and took command. In the meantime a corps of Federal infantry had entered Rome, and on the third morning moved out in heavy force with the cavalry. Their object was to strike the line of march of Gen. Hood, who was then moving his army around Rome. Gen. Harrison held his position tenaciously, though his Texas regiments were once or twice driven back by the overwhelming forces of the enemy, and it was in making a flank charge upon these lines of infantry, ordered by Gen. Harrison, who took them for dismounted cavalry, that the author and a large number of his company were taken prisoners. Although his lines were finally broken and driven back by the desperate odds against him, his object was accomplished, and the rear of Hood's army passed safely by.

Gen. Harrison was always at the head of his column, and was almost constantly in the presence of the enemy. His men were devotedly attached to him and had the utmost confidence in his judgment and gallantry, though he was a rigid disciplinarian and exacted the most faithful performance of duty; hence his command was always well

guarded and he never suffered a surprise. He was severely wounded and had several horses killed under him, but he considered himself the property of the service and devoted to the exigencies of war, and he shunned no danger, evaded no hardship, and withheld no effort which the cause he espoused demanded. After the surrender of the army of Gen. Lee, he endeavored to transfer his command to the department of Gen. Smith, but on learning that he, too, had surrendered, his command was paroled and disbanded at Macon, Mississippi, and he returned with his men to Texas.

In 1866 he was elected district judge and served with eminent satisfaction to the bar and the people, but was removed by the military authority in 1877 as one of the incorrigible obstructions to the Congressional plans; but really, as in all the other instances of a like character mentioned in this work, in a spirit of revenge and to make way for the promotion of some Northern adventurer or to reward Southern infidelity.

He was one of the Democratic electors of Texas during the Presidential campaign of 1872, and since that time has devoted himself exclusively to the practice of his profession and the supervision of his farm. He is a good lawyer and a safe counselor, but his strongest professional qualities are those of a successful advocate. He is a man of great independence of character, frank and positive in the expression of his views, tenacious and conscientious in his convictions, and faithful in the discharge of his duties and obligations, both as a lawyer and citizen. These qualities render him popular professionally and socially, and he is a man highly esteemed in every circle and in all the relations of life. He was married at Waco, in 1858, to Miss Sallie E. McDonald, a niece of Gov. John Ellis, the well known Governor of North Carolina during the war, a lady of most excellent qualities, and this event has been felicitous both to his happiness and prosperity.